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Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of

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Reallocation of the 216-220 MHz,
1390-1395 MHz, 1427-1429 MHz,
1429-1432 MHz, 1432-1435 MHz,
1670-1675 MHz, and 2385-2390 MHz
Government Transfer Bands

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ET Dkt. No. 00-221 /
RM-9854

COMMENTS OF Hometown Connections, International, LLC

Hometown Connections files these comment to urge the Federal Communications Commission to allocate the 1427-1429 MHz band, on a primary basis, for utility telemetry operations, including automatic meter reading ("AMR"), and to allow utility telemetry and AMR operations to share the 1429-1432 MHz band on a co-primary basis with the medical telemetry service, as described in Option 2 of the Commission's notice of proposed rulemaking ("*NPRM*") in the above-referenced proceeding.

DISCUSSION

Hometown Connections is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the American Public Power Association, the public power association representing the interests of the nation's 2000 public power utilities. Hometown Connections is a service organization created by the APPA to provide competitive advantage to members of the APPA. This competitive advantage is created through the provisioning of products and services at discounted prices, or through unique packaging of attributes. Hometown Connections markets meter reading products and services to the public power utility customer base, including products for which the value or effectiveness would be impacted by this ruling.

In 1992, Congress directed the federal government to foster the development of new and innovative AMR technologies believing that such technologies would lead to efficient

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energy use and would protect the public health and safety.¹ Since that time the Commission has authorized use of the 1427-1432 MHz (“1.4 GHz”) frequency bands for AMR service on a nationwide basis. Now the FCC has received a petition from Itron, Inc. (“Itron”) requesting a formal allocation of the 1427-1432 MHz band for utility telemetry and AMR. Several other parties filed petitions for rulemaking requesting allocation of certain of the 1.4 GHz band for various other uses, some of which are incompatible with using the band for utility telemetry and AMR.

In its *NPRM*, the FCC proposes three options for allocation of the 1.4 GHz spectrum. Hometown Connections urges the Commission to adopt Option 2, which would allocate the 1427-1429 MHz band on a primary basis exclusively for telemetry operations and the 1429-1432 MHz band on a co-primary basis to utility and medical telemetry. Adopting Option 2 would continue the Commission’s policies, serve the substantial public interest in providing a “home” for AMR, and protect the substantial investment made by utilities and other critical infrastructure companies who are deploying telemetry services.

Use of the 1.4 GHz band for AMR helps to support critical infrastructure industries, who need wireless technologies to monitor systems remotely and to collect data from distant and widely dispersed locations in a timely and cost-effective manner. AMR technologies enhance utility productivity and efficiency and speed responses to natural disasters or other system anomalies that may pose a threat to public health or safety. In addition:

- AMR increases utility productivity and efficiency, making it possible for a meter reader to increase by a factor of ten, twenty, or more the number of meters that can be read in an eight-hour shift; obviates the need for estimated bills and multiple trips to customer homes; and improves a utility’s ability to detect meter tampering and theft of services.

¹ *Telephone and Dispute Resolution Act*, Pub. L. No. 102-556, 106 Stat. 4181 (1992). Congress remains concerned about the use of spectrum for utility use including recommending that NTIA conduct a study on energy, water, and railroad spectrum use in one of its appropriations bills and directing the FCC to issue a report regarding the same. H.R. Rep. No. 106-1005, at 114-115 (2000).

- AMR establishes a direct link between a utility and its customer premises utility meters, enabling the utility to offer its customers a variety of strategies to reduce peak demand and shift usage to off-peak hours, as well as encourage conservation by providing customers with detailed, real-time price and consumption data.
- AMR is a necessity in a deregulated utility environment in which separate entities may be competing in the generation, transmission, wholesaling, and distribution to end users of energy. Reconciling the multiple, overlapping transactions involving these service providers requires consumption information on a daily basis, and in some cases more frequently.

The roughly 2000 public power utilities which Hometown Connections services are either now or in the future utilizing these frequencies to carry out their AMR strategies. Almost all of these utilities are too small to provide significant feedback to the FCC on this issue. In addition, this issue will likely not be on their “radar screen” until long after the decision has been made by the FCC, limiting their future options for AMR. Therefore, Hometown Connections wishes to speak in favor of Option 2 because we feel it is the most advantageous for the utilities we represent. Having the full availability of these frequencies dedicated to AMR will provide valuable future operating options to these utilities, and needs to be protected now.

Utilities have invested many millions of dollars in AMR networks at 1.4 GHz. Neither Option 1 nor Option 3 would allow AMR services to continue to use the complete spectrum range in which AMR investments are currently used. There is no benefit to providing utilities access to other frequency bands for AMR, as set out in Option 1. The AMR installed base and all equipment development is in the 1427-1432 MHz band. In addition, the benefits to utilities from having access to 2 MHz of paired frequencies, as provided in Option 1, would not make up for the loss of the benefits of AMR and other telemetry.

- Utilities would not have exclusive access to the paired frequencies, since they would be available for licensing to all businesses and other entities.

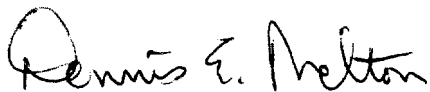
- Any service that is granted access to the 1427-29 MHz band will have to protect essential military operations through 2004 and will have to protect radio astronomy operations indefinitely. These constraints will substantially limit deployment of general purpose mobile and fixed radio services by utilities, while AMR has a proven record of compatibility with military and radio astronomy uses of the spectrum.

Under Option 3, AMR service users lose the use of the 1430-1432 MHz band to Little LEOs and PMRS while obtaining the 1427-1430 MHz band for use on a co-primary basis with WMTS. Either of these two options would cause AMR service users to lose spectrum and would prove costly, disruptive, and inefficient. Neither option upgrades AMR status throughout the entire spectrum band in which AMR currently operates, as would be provided for by Option 2.

Finally, allocating the 1427-1432 MHz band for AMR and utility telemetry would be spectrum efficient and would harmonize spectrum use for these purposes with Canada, thereby easing the need for cross-border frequency coordination and giving U.S. manufacturers and service providers a wider market opportunity.

For all of these reasons, Hometown Connections urges the Commission to adopt Option 2.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis E. Melton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dennis E. Melton
Chief Operating Officer
Hometown Connections International, LLC